Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 9 May 2013

Information regarding the possibility of internal relocation for MDC members in Zimbabwe.

The Executive Summary of a *United Kingdom Home Office* report on a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe, in a paragraph headed "Internal relocation", states:

> "It was reported that there were no legal requirements or restrictions for those wishing to resettle in other parts of Zimbabwe. While in theory resettlement to any part of the country was possible, in practice, resettlement to rural areas was reported to be difficult, especially for those considered to be opposed to ZANU-PF. However, most organisations stated that relocation to the country's main urban centres posed relatively few problems – the main constraint being economic." (United Kingdom Home Office (21 September 2010) *Report of Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe, Harare: 9-17 August 2010*, p.6)

See also section of this report titled "Internal Relocation" (paragraph 4.1) which states:

> "Sources stated that there were no legal requirements or restrictions when moving and settling in other parts of Zimbabwe. While in theory resettlement to another part of the country was possible, most organisations agreed that relocation to rural areas would be difficult for a number of reasons. Several organisations noted that where this happened, local chiefs (who are usually associated with ZANU-PF) would need to be informed, and would have responsibility for deciding whether land should be allocated to new arrivals. Most organisations stated that relocation to urban areas posed few problems – the main constraint being economic. However, relocation to smaller urban areas may be more problematic for non-economic reasons." (ibid, p.42)

Paragraph 4.4 of this report quotes the NGO Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights as follows:

> "Relocation to rural areas is very difficult as there is no land available to be allocated to new arrivals without the authority of the chief in that specific area. Movement to urban areas is possible but uncommon as economic reasons prevent people paying for accommodation. Employment prospects will affect where people migrate to. Culturally, moving between rural areas is not common; those who move to a new rural area are likely to arouse suspicion as members of the community are well-known and outsiders are easily identified and targeted by those who remain suspicious about why they have moved to that area." (ibid, p.43)

Paragraph 4.6 quotes the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum as noting:

> "The question of moving between different rural areas is not as simple as one of political affiliation; there are also questions of ethnicity. It is always difficult but it would for example be easier for an Ndebele to move to an Ndebele area, and

> likewise for Shona. There are some mixed areas but even if a member of an ethnic group were to move to an area dominated by their own group, they would still face difficulties. Much will depend on the local leadership, with some being more tolerant than others." (ibid, p.44)

Paragraph 4.8 quotes an international NGO who wished to remain anonymous as stating:

> "There are no legal restrictions. However, the intelligence systems of the main political parties are sophisticated and it would not be possible for those who have come to the adverse attention of a party to avoid that risk by relocating within Zimbabwe. This applies equally to rural and urban areas. Thus, once a low level but influential MDC supporter had been singled out for attention in a rural area had been identified as such, it would not be possible for that person to avoid the threat by relocating to an urban area because that knowledge would follow them to the city, even though someone with a similar profile in the city would be unlikely to attract the same level of interest and so would probably not be at risk." (ibid, p.44)

A decision record of the *Refugee Review Tribunal of Australia*, in a paragraph headed "Relocation" (paragraph 84), states:

> "As to whether the applicant can safely relocate within Zimbabwe the Tribunal considers that in the present circumstances of escalating violence in Zimbabwe, it is difficult to predict with any certainty the relative safety of the applicant in different parts of Zimbabwe, particularly given that the applicant is a known MDC supporter. In these circumstances the Tribunal does not accept that there is anywhere in Zimbabwe where there is no real chance of feared persecution. The Tribunal considers that there is no part of Zimbabwe to which the applicant could reasonably be expected to relocate where he would be safe from the persecution which he fears." (Refugee Review Tribunal of Australia (5 September 2012) *RRT Case No. 1204288*)

The 2013 *United States Department of State* country report on Zimbabwe, in a section titled "Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons", states:

> "The constitution and law provide for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, the government restricted these rights in practice." (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Zimbabwe*, p.32)

A paragraph headed "In-country Movement" states:

> "Police made in-country movement difficult by regularly mounting checkpoints nationwide along most major routes; within urban areas a single road could have several roadblocks in the span of a few miles." (ibid, p.32)

References:

Refugee Review Tribunal of Australia (5 September 2012) *RRT Case No. 1204288*
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United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Zimbabwe*
http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204395.pdf
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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

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European Country of Origin Information Network
Google
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
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United Kingdom Home Office
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United States Department of State